

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2079
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: AINR, EALR, EFIN, ECON, UR
SUBJECT: BOOK PRICE INCREASE BOTH RUMORED AND DENIED

REF: LENINGRAD 1945

SUMMARY. EMBASSY HAS HEARD
BOTH ASSERTIONS AND DENIALS THAT BOOK PRICES
WILL RISE NEXT YEAR. RUMORS OF BOOK PRICE INCREASES
ABOUNDED IN MOSCOW LATE LAST YEAR, BUT NON EVENTUATED.
1977 PUBLISHING HOUSE PLANS DO NOT INDICATE SIGNIFICANT
PRICE INCREASES. GIVEN LARGE NUMBER OF BOOKS REGULARLY
PURCHASED, EMBASSY SHOULD KNOW BY LATE JANUARY WHETHER
THERE IS EVEN A SMALL CHANGE IN THE AVERAGE PRICE OF
BOOKS IN THE NEW YEAR, AND WE WILL REPORT ANY SIGNIFICANT
DEVELOPMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN NOVEMBER CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ABOUT
BOOK PRICES IN US AND USSR, USA INSTITUTE EXECUTIVE
SECRETARY E.A. IVANYAN, WHO HAS HIMSELF PUBLISHED
SEVERAL BOOKS HERE, SAID THAT LOW BOOK PRICES IN USSR
"MAY CHANGE VERY SOON." HE SAID INCREASE WOULD BE
CLOSER TO 100 PERCENT THAN TO 10-15 PERCENT AND
THAT INCREASE WOULD OCCUR "EARLY IN THE YEAR" (1977).
HE LINKED THE PRICE INCREASE TO INCREASED COSTS OF THE
BASIC MATERIALS.

2. EARLIER, AT THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN PUBLISHERS'
SEMINAR IN LATE SEPTEMBER, THE HEAD OF THE ACADEMY OF
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SCIENCES PUBLISHING HOUSE, ACKNOWLEDGED TO EMBOFF

THAT SOVIET BOOKS WERE UNDERPRICED BUT STRONGLY ASSERTED THAT PRICES WOULD NOT BE INCREASED, NOTING THAT BOOKS WERE PRICED LOW IN ORDER TO INCREASE DEMAND FOR THEM.

3. THERE WERE RUMORS OF IMPENDING PRICE INCREASES LATE LAST YEAR, BUT NO GENERAL BOOK PRICE INCREASE OCCURRED IN 1976. THERE HAVE BEEN FEWER SUCH RUMORS IN MOSCOW THIS YEAR. THE ANNUAL PLANS OF PUBLISHING HOUSES FOR 1977 WHICH HAVE BEEN ACQUIRED BY PPO DO NOT INDICATE SIGNIFICANT PRICE INCREASES. EMBASSY THEREFORE REMAINS SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE RUMORS.

4. EMBASSY PPO PURCHASES ABOUT ONE THOUSAND VOLUMES PER WEEK AT AN AVERAGE PRICE OF 96 KOPEKS (\$1.28). BY LATE JANUARY, THEREFORE, WE SHOULD HAVE A GOOD INDICATION OF WHETHER EVEN A SMALL AND UNANNOUNCED PRICE INCREASE HAS OCCURRED AND WILL REPORT AGAIN THEN. IN THE MEANTIME, WE WILL REPORT ANY SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT AS IT OCCURS. MATLOCK

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